

From: William Stelle [Will.Stelle@noaa.gov]
Sent: Friday, July 22, 2011 10:42 AM
To: Mike Connor; Belin, Letty; Nawi, David; Jerry Meral; Mark Cowin; Glaser, Donald R; Rod.Mcinnis@noaa.gov; Lohofener, Ren; Castleberry, Dan; Maria Rea; Ron Milligan; Barajas, Federico; Michael Tucker; Hoffman-Floerke, Dale; Jennifer Norris; Karla Nemeth; Eileen Sobeck
Subject: Wednesday BDCP State/Federal Policy Meetings

Dear Michael, Jerry, Mark et al:

I have been thinking about our "Wednesday meetings" to address our top tier issues efficiently. I would like to offer some ideas on how to sharpen our pencils, so to speak. I found our meeting on Wednesday to meander, and the presentations of the issues and topics unfocused. Rather than grouse about it, I'd like to offer some specific suggestions. Forgive my bluntness here, but if we keep doing what we've been doing for the last nine months, we will fail. And Michael, I think we've defaulted to assuming that somehow, since you've been designed the federal lead, somehow you will make this all happen. That is totally unfair to you and unrealistic. Hence, the specifics below.

1. Facilitation: We need to have someone facilitate these meetings and keep us focused and on task. Nobody is charged with that role currently, and we need it. I nominate Karla. Her job as facilitator will be to keep the discussions focused on the agenda items and the overall task at hand, which is to resolve issues to enable us to succeed in our shared objective of publishing a DEIS next spring. If people start meandering off the yellow brick road, her job is to call them on it.

2. Meeting preparation and execution. We have earlier designated Karla, Jen, Federico and Mike as the core staff to support this Wednesday group. I therefore believe we look to them to execute the necessary preparations and the presentation of the issues. If we need to substitute someone for a week or two because of other duties, fine, but lets keep the core group small and mutually responsible. Their job is:

A. Get us the homework. On a topic by topic basis, they prepare (or have prepared) a concise two page description of the specific issues that are in disagreement and which require resolution, and the options for resolving them. These issue papers then must be distributed at least two days in advance to enable all of the policy people to discuss them internally, do some shuttle diplomacy with others if needed, discuss with outside caucus representative as needed, and come prepared to resolve them.

Additional comment: Wednesday was poorly prepared. The critical list issues was imprecise and geared more towards general topics and general time-frames from a project management/schedule perspective. We flopped around too much, having vague discussions around chopping and pasting Chuck Gardner's supposed schedule. Nor were Jerry's top topics well integrated into a consolidated list of top issues. We thus wasted time in unproductive discussion and never really reached an affirmative decision on the top tier issues and the sequencing of them.

B. Present the issues at the meetings with precision. As a general rule I believe that a staff person should be charged with sketching the issue that needs resolving, and helping to inform the back and forth in the discussions amongst the policy leaders. We must assume, however, some familiarity with the topic and therefore a focus on the specific issues in disagreement.

Additional comment. The discussion of the north delta diversion topic was unfocused. The specific issues in disagreement were not clearly delineated, leaving me at least wondering why we were even talking about it, feeling like we were all shadow boxing. These Wednesday meetings are not general updates on complex topics; they are decision meetings on specific issues that require the senior policy makers to decide issues in order to get to a DEIS this coming spring. The north diversion discussion seemed more like an update on the good work of the Fish Passage Technical Team. That is not its purpose.

C. Track decisions and press on on what's next. In order to maintain discipline, we must as a group agree on the topics for the next several weeks so that the program experts have the warning and advance time to prepare the issue papers. This translates into the core staff pressing us weekly to confirm what we've just decided, and to confirm the upcoming agenda items.

Again, my apologies for being a bit blunt, but please trust that it is well intended, even if potentially erroneous. If I err on some of this, please feel free to push back, as this is not a question of winning or losing arguments. We need collectively to succeed.

Sincerely,

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